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murderer whom *Fédora* pursues and with whom she falls in love. Mr. Mantell is a young, tall, handsome Englishman, who came to this country, last season, to act the hero of "The Romany Rye" in a travelling company, and who appeared at the Grand Opera House without attracting any special attention.

On the morning after the production of "*Fédora*," Mr. Mantell woke to find himself famous. He is as good an actor as Osmond Tearle, with a handsome face and figure and a more musical voice. He has more power than Charles Coghlan, and especially excels in that subtle personal magnetism which captures an audience. He has fire, discretion, distinction, reserve. He reminds one of what the late Charles Thorne would have been had he learned the art of repose while still young.

It is characteristic of our managers that, while they have been ransacking England for a leading man, offering five hundred dollars a week and a share in the profits of their theatres to London favorites, here was Mr. Mantell unable to secure a New York engagement. Now he is the talk of the town and everybody wants him to break his engagement to travel with Miss Davenport and remain in the metropolis. I hope that he will be wise enough to refuse. A season of "*Fédora*" will do him good, and his success is so genuine that he can afford to wait for its profits.

Besides the heroine and the hero, there are only two other prominent parts in "*Fédora*." One is the friend of the family—and the dramatist—who allows the heroine to talk to him, and thus inform the audience of the details of the story. E. A. McDowell plays this part very discreetly. The other is the loud and giddy *Countess Soukareff*, played rather too loudly by Ada Monk. The other characters are all small, but important, and Miss Davenport has cast them carefully, but not always successfully.

The world-wide notoriety of "*Fédora*" could not fill the little Fourteenth Street Theatre on the first night; but the personal graces and manly acting of Mr. Mantell saved the piece from failure and will secure it a success. As for Miss Davenport, she does her best and is not to be blamed because she is not Sarah Bernhardt.

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"FACTS," the third of the opening novelties, need not detain us more than a paragraph. It is "The Mighty Dollar" in another form, and enables Mr. and Mrs. Florence to play their old parts under new names. In all probability, it will have a short life, but a merry one.

Without any disrespect to Mr. and Mrs. Florence, who are old favorites, always welcome, the public are more interested in other facts, and these facts are Mr. Irving, Miss Ellen Terry and the transfer of the London Lyceum Company, scenery, and properties to the Star Theatre, where Mr. Irving will make his New York debut in "The Bells." The play has been seen here before, but not with such acting as Mr. Irving puts into it. "The Bells" is to him what "*Fédora*" is to Sarah Bernhardt, and I can confidently predict his great success.

Mr. Irving has eccentricities of gait, of manner and of elocution which seriously handicap him before an American audience in any legitimate rôle; but in "The Bells" all these eccentricities become part of the character which he has created; they are not noticeable, or rather, they are noticeable only as belonging to the man who is haunted by the memory of his crime. The audience will accept them as characteristics of the *Burgomaster*, not of Mr. Irving. It is a wonderful performance, and will be a revelation to the present generation of playgoers who have never seen the *Fagin* of J. W. Wallack, Jr., whom Mr. Irving very much resembles.

In "Charles the First," which Mr. Irving will play on his second night in New York, to introduce Ellen Terry, the great English actor will also be protected in his peculiarities by the fact that the audience will identify them with the sad monarch. The play was written by Mr. Wills expressly for Mr. Irving, and has never before been acted in this country.

Perhaps the public and the critics will be so impressed with these two plays that Mr. Irving will easily repeat his English successes in the rest of his repertory. Perhaps, having twice won them on his own ground, he can thenceforward do with them as he pleases. On the other hand, the Americans have a keen sense of humor, and there is the likelihood that it

may be excited by some of Mr. Irving's performances.

But, certainly, no reasonable person should forget that Mr. Irving is the greatest of English actors, if not the greatest actor in English; that he is the most artistic, conscientious and successful manager of the present age; that he has vastly reformed and improved the theatre, before and behind the curtain; that he has reconciled society and the stage to an extent unprecedented in history, and that, aside from his acting, he ranks by right of talent as one of the truly great men whom such a country as this should be delighted to honor.

Is there any doubt, then, as to Mr. Irving's reception here? There should be none; but, if there were no doubt, there would be no necessity for these few earnest words in advance. And I feel this necessity.

POLONIUS.

Operatic Feuilleton.

"The night shall be filled with music."

Longfellow.

THE season of Italian opera, concerning the prospects of which so much has been written for months, will, in a few days, be fairly entered upon. The old Academy of Music will appeal to old New York, to the solid dilettanti and to the "laudatores temporis acti," rich in reminiscences of Castle Garden and the Astor Place Opera House. The new Metropolitan will be thronged with the "nouveaux riches," with the gilded youth of the city, and with those somewhat inexperienced lovers of tune who can speak more authoritatively of the form of a trotter than of the phrasing of an aria. Will the public, who could be happy with either—were t'other dear charmer away—choose wisely between the two theatres? Will it say with Mercutio, "a plague on both your houses!" and seek less expensive entertainment elsewhere? Or will it transfer its attention from Fortieth to Fourteenth Street and vice versa, according as occasion may warrant? Of the three courses of action, the last appears the most sensible. The Fabian policy, in the choice of amusements is the policy that pays. Let us see if the tedium of its delays cannot be lessened by a little sober prophecy.

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UNLESS Mr. Mapleson's new tenors turn out wonderfully well, the two companies may be described as pretty evenly matched. Mr. Abbey's strength lies in singers of sterner stuff, and Mr. Mapleson's in warblers of the gentler sex. A troupe that can claim Patti for mezzo carattere parts, Gerster as an interpreter of bravura and soprano sfolato music, and Pappenheim as a prima donna drammatica is worthy of any audience, the world over. And a body of artists led by Nilsson, Sembrich, Scalchi and Trebelli is little if at all inferior in point of merit and drawing power. Moreover, Mr. Abbey's might is materially increased by the long list of male singers engaged for his season. Campanini and Stagno, Kaschmann and Del Puente are known to the habitual opera-goer, and most of Mr. Mapleson's tenors and baritones are not. Nevertheless, from a purely musical standpoint, there is rather more promise in Mr. Mapleson's than in Mr. Abbey's array of names. Mme. Patti's star shines unrivalled in the firmament of song. There have been controversies as to the relative merit of Lucca and Nilsson, and there will be discussions as to the relative eminence of Gerster and Sembrich. But there is only one Patti, and those who would hear her must go to the old homestead. And, in the affections of the people, it is likely that but one bravura songstress will hold her own when the season ends. Mme. Sembrich will produce what the Italians term an *effetto plateale*. As Kean put it, the house will rise at her. Her brilliant and powerful voice, and fluent and sparkling execution will delight the admirers of pyrotechnics. But there is a liquid beauty and a crystalline transparency about Mme. Gerster's tones that stir an audience to far greater depths. Nor can Mme. Pappenheim be underrated. We have had no dramatic prima donna deserving the name since Mme. Pappenheim was last heard in New York, and if her voice and style have not deteriorated, we shall hear some parts sung as they have not been sung for years.

FROM a musical point of view, then, Mr. Mapleson must be considered particularly well equipped. Mr. Abbey's company is hardly as nicely balanced. Mme. Nilsson occupies a sort of debatable ground between a mezzo carattere songstress and a dramatic prima donna. Her "specialties" are "Mignon," "Faust" and "Traviata." Historically, she could cope with the most trying rôles of the repertoire; vocally she dare not. Mme. Sembrich is an admirable *Lucia*, but lacks the experience of the stage needed to do justice at all points to more exacting characters. Mme. Scalchi is an invaluable contralto—in an opera in which the soprano is the central figure, and Mme. Trebelli-Bettini is entitled to the same distinction. But the grand voice of the former artist, and the consummate skill of the latter will not invest "La Favorita" or "Carmen" with the charm and picturesqueness lent to both works by Lucca and Hauck. We need not speak of the lesser members of either company. Mme. Fursch-Madi and Mme. Valleria, at the Metropolitan, and the legion of unknowns whom Mr. Mapleson imports may keep the deadhead in his seat, but will not bring money into the treasury.

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MR. ABBEY is more opulent in tenors than his opponent. He has secured two artists of recognized rank—Signor Campanini and Signor Stagno. We are fast becoming Anglicized in our tastes and habits, and the London tendency to stick to old friends is creeping o'er us apace. As Signor Campanini ages, he advances in public favor. His impassioned acting is accepted in lieu of song, and the results of aphony are often greeted as lovely mezzo voce effects. Still, better that a little imagination should help out a time-worn artist, than that the ear and good taste should be shocked by the rough work of a beginner. It is to be regretted that Signor Stagno should have almost reached the same stage of decadence as Signor Campanini, and, also, that he ranges through about the same repertoire. At all events, in the language of the new dilettanti, they will make a good start. And they will surely distance their associate, whose engagement is the only one to be marvelled at. If M. Capoul can demand a hearing in the Metropolitan Opera House, there is hope, next season, for Mlle. Aimée. Judges of chinaware know that in most table-services made in China the practised eye will find, concealed among the designs, some tiny improper suggestion. The engagement of M. Capoul, revealing the fine Italian hand of Mr. Grau, is more out of place than the less perceptible offence of the Celestial.

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IF scenic splendor is taken into account, the representations at the Metropolitan will probably outshine those at the Academy. In respect of ensemble, we should cast our lot with Mr. Mapleson. Signor Arditì's band and chorus have been under his bâton for years, and familiarity between the masses and their chief is a factor of the utmost importance. Moreover, Signor Arditì is used to the exigencies of an American season, and can rehearse three operas while a thoroughbred European conductor makes ready to bring out one.

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WITH all these facts in view, however, the Fabian policy is the policy which may be most judiciously counselled to the intending spectator. If he must come to a choice at once, he may be less in doubt than before looking through this article. And if he is anxious to know which of the two managers will come forth winner, he need not wait at all. The question is not which of the impresarii will make most, but which will lose most money. Mr. Abbey's expenses will be about \$33,000 a week, Mr. Mapleson's about \$27,000. Except for a fortnight, the receipts are not likely to equal the expenditures of either house. Will Messrs. Abbey and Mapleson, then, join the long procession of ruined managers which the frequenters of operatic entertainments in America can conjure up in their memories? Will they follow in the footsteps of Ullmann, Grau, Maretzek, Strakosch, e tutti quanti?

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WE opine not. They will lose a great deal of money, but their losses will not impoverish them. The financial record of the approaching operatic campaign might be bound between the covers and usurp the title of one of Gaboriau's books. It will be a story of "Other People's Money." LORENZO.